

**TESTIMONY ON SJR 34
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES
JUNE 22, 2023**

**PRESENTED BY: MEAGAN A. FLYNN, OREGON SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE
OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT**

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

I am Meagan Flynn, Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, and here on behalf of the Oregon Judicial Department and its elected state judges to support Senate Joint Resolution 34 and its goal of creating an independent body to review and set salaries for judges and other elected state officials.

In all branches of government, we have seen the consequences of our failure as a state to set salaries for our elected officials that reflect the responsibilities of the job and that help ensure that we can attract and retain highly qualified people to those offices of public service.

A similar commission is in place in the State of Washington, and I understand that it has worked well to identify appropriate salaries through an objective, independent process that includes human resource professionals and is removed from the unpredictability of the political process.

We saw the need to separate appropriate compensation from political pressures with Oregon's previous version of a Public Officials Compensation Commission. That commission was created in 1983, became inactive, and was reactivated in 2007 only to again become inactive and later abolished.

That commission's final act before it was formally abolished was to issue salary recommendations in 2008. Those recommendations identified an appropriate salary level for state circuit court judges to receive starting in 2009, but the increase wasn't approved by the legislature that session. In fact, it took until 2017 for the statutory salary of a circuit court judge to reach the level that the commission had recommended as appropriate for 2009.

The problem is clear for all three branches, and I look forward to this independent commission establishing appropriate salaries that reflect the responsibilities of the position as well as the skills and experience necessary to do the job so Oregon can attract and retain highly skilled public servants to elected office.

Thank you for your continued support.